

City of Gahanna

*200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230*



Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 3, 2010

6:15 PM

City Hall

Planning Commission Workshop

David K. Andrews

Anthony Penn

Jennifer Price

Kristin Rosan

Donald R. Shepherd

David B. Thom

Robert Westwood

Stacey L. Bashore, Deputy Clerk of Council

Chair

Applications

Z-0010-2009

To consider a Zoning application to zone 1.422 + .851 acres located at 1105 Beecher Crossing North; current zoning L-SO (Limited Overlay, Suburban Office), requested zoning L-AR (Limited Overlay, Multi-Family Residential); Melissa's House Foundation, Elaine Goldberg, applicant.

Chair opened the workshop at 6:18 p.m. and stated the workshop is for Planning Commission members to have questions answered by the developer and if there is any time left we will allow brief comments.

Sherwood stated that the motion made last week for V-0001-2010 for Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church was not the motion needed to be made; it will be on the agenda again for next week; spoke with City Attorney and he requested that the original motion be rescinded, and a new motion be made subject to Council's approval of the lease, but not the variance itself.

Penn left the dais at 6:20 p.m. due to conflict of interest with the applications being discussed.

Sam Shuler stated she was there on behalf of Community Housing Network (CHN); director of real estate development; Melissa's House Foundation was a way to honor memory of the Goldberg's daughter; that is the vision that drives how this will be developed; introduced Jackie Jacobs from Columbus Jewish foundation; Jim Miller and Cigarette Parks from Pizutti; CHN is a non profit agency; we have been doing this for 20 years; Melissa's House came to us to partner with them for grants to match their private fundraising; we currently operate over 1100 units in the central Ohio area; we will be managing the project; want to mention that Anthony Penn our Chief Operation Officer was not on Planning Commission when this application was filed; his term came up on Civil Service and he was appointed to Planning Commission; he is recusing himself from voting or sitting on the dais as part of the Commission during this discussion; there are no implications, it was frankly bad timing; proposal for the 2.3 acre site is for a 10 unit all one bedroom development; two themes that the Goldbergs want is an attractive homelike appearance and an emphasis on socialization; site selection was based on the mature trees and the home like setting; Gahanna is a very friendly place to live and people can feel safe; trying to help people get socially connected; will have quality interior design; lot of common space for tenants to socialize in; fitness area; kitchen; computer room; small meeting room and a coordinator room; there will be no services on site; tenants will be disabled by mental illness but will be capable enough to live without onsite support services; able to live independently; will have some case management; will be screening people who can pay rent; have life skills such as cooking, cleaning, personal hygiene; highly functional; just need a little extra support; met with neighbors to hear their concerns; heard a lot of concern about whether or not these tenants will have a negative impact on their community; have only seen benefits to other communities we have units in; will have a staff person in the building 4 hours a day 7 days a week; that person will coordinate social services; will be a trained social worker; they will have the ability to understand mental illness enough to know if a tenant is having issues; people will be there to intervene; will contact whoever is needed to intervene early to help them stabilize and remain or find some place else for them to go until they can handle the situation; mental illness is a slow progression and this staff person will be able to recognize the signs; reviewed a zoning map with the Commission; we want to zone it L-AR which is the same zoning as Beecher Crossing and consistent with what is there; will have a lower density than Beecher; consistent with what was

originally recommended in land use plan; was rezoned office by a private developer; we have amended the site plan to remove the need for a variance for set back and parking; we will be submitting the removal of the variance in writing; we have met with the community and have heard a lot of concerns; we wanted to put in writing the responses we have given; we reviewed the Good Neighbor Agreement and showed them leases and tenant selection processes; we showed what is expected of our tenants; we know that not everyone agrees with our proposal but we are sure that we have answered as many questions as we can. Thom clarified that the variance is being removed because the parking is going from 12 to over 20 spaces and that it meets the minimum requirements. Thom asked if this parcel were to change in nature how many spots would it require and Gard stated it would be one space per 350 square feet of building. Thom stated he understood that a new development text was being rewritten. Shuler stated there were not any major changes; mostly cosmetic. Thom stated the text from the development on N. Hamilton Road spelled out disabilities of those living there; disabilities is a big word; can you explain what type of disabilities would be a part of this unit; narrow it down to what criteria you use to select individuals. Shuler stated it would be targeted to mental illness disabilities and not targeted to MRDD or Alcohol or Drug rehabilitation; occasionally physical disability comes along with it; if you are on the waiting list we do a criminal background and credit check; there is a licensed assessment to determine their ability to live in independent housing and how many services they need; if they need high service they are directed to those units; middle ground services is someone who needs a resident manager on the grounds; a person whose service needs are very low would be directed to this type of housing; mental health system is the third part that is done before we house. Thom stated when this was first presented it was directed to those with eating disorders is this still what you are looking for; what type of disability will be housed. Shuler stated it is broader than eating disorders; could include depression, schizophrenia etc. Thom asked if there was something similar to Melissa's House in the Central Ohio area. Shuler stated we have scattered site housing; part of mainstream neighborhoods with no staff on site; Beveledere is on the west side off Broad and there is a new facility in Bexley for drug/alcohol; it is a multi-family site in a suburban community. Thom have you had any experience with trouble from your tenants, particularly those who had to be removed because of their disability vs someone not paying rent. Penn stated that the operations side falls to my division; first line of questions in regard to disabilities, we are limited by HIPAA as to how much we can go into; disabilities are protected under fair housing on who's going to live there; there are some cautions we have to have; historically the people who come to the agency suffer from major depression, Bi- polar disorder and schizophrenia; profiles of people with well managed disabilities; they have insight on how to take medications; how to be monitored and how to be good neighbors; we probably have less problems at our sites because of safety measures we have in place by monitoring residents; met with Columbus Police officers last week and they asked if there was anything they could do to lend their support; in most cases they will testify that crime was down because of the management of our units; we never promise our residents will be perfect; but what we bring is an asset; as far as screening we work in consultation with Board of Mental Health; there is a psychiatric screening before they are sent to us; we review them and then have our own screening process with reference and background checks; so the short answer is we don't believe our residents are going to add any crime to the community. Thom asked if the tenants are typically paying rent to where are they living prior to moving in. Penn stated that our residents come from a variety of backgrounds; group homes, some with family members; some from hospitals; working in partnership with Melissa's House we will be reaching out to family members who are caring for loved ones who have mental illness. Thom asked about Mifflin Township Fire's response; have they reviewed the site plan. Gard stated we did not receive a response yet. Price asked if there was a sense of how many units have closed because of lack of need or the opposite

there was a greater need; concerns on what would happen if this facility was no longer necessary. Shuler stated that the waiting list is over 2 years with over 2,000 people on it so not needing the facility would not be a concern; we have sold some of our scattered sites; our original model was for people who had been over institutionalized; some ended up homeless; that is why CHN started with smaller units; sold some doubles that were not very efficient; but have never had a lack of need. Price asked if they envisioned changing the service needs of the population at Melissa's House; have you ever changed the population at a site. Shuler stated we have not; property stays the same because the demand is so high. Price asked what the size of the other scattered sites were. Shuler stated the average site is 6 units but it goes anywhere from 4 to 12 units. Price stated in terms of this population how many are holding jobs. Penn stated around 32%. Shuler stated there will be some who are disabled enough to collect disability benefits. Price asked how many would be relying on public transportation. Shuler stated at least half of the people; we have measured the distance to the closest stop and it is a mile; it is a little over 1/2 mile to Giant Eagle; all tenants will have case managers that will help with transportation; Melissa's House has also been working with different churches in the area to help tenants with transportation. Price asked in comparison to other sites, is that distance normal. Shuler stated that anything much over a mile would be tough. Price asked in regard to some of the surrounding residents' comments of insurance premiums going up, are you aware of that being a normal situation. Shuler stated she has never heard of anyone's insurance rates going up because of special needs housing. Price stated she had a lack of familiarity with HIPAA or Fair Housing; can it be limited to a very specific disorder such as eating disorders or other diagnosis; just a question as to whether anything had ever been that narrow. Shuler stated the mental health issues are defined based on how it affects daily living skills; but we have never been asked to target disorders specifically. Shepherd asked did you research any other sites in Gahanna that would not require a zoning change. Shuler stated this location met all of their needs the best; would hazard to guess that almost any site they chose would have to be rezoned. Shepherd asked if there were any other sites that were similar to Melissa's House design. Shuler stated we have rehabbed a lot of sites; but no new construction. Rosan asked as far as funding is there a break down on what the funding is to develop the project and ongoing maintenance; what is the longevity of the project; what happens if Foundation goes bankrupt or HUD decides not to provide funding. Shuler stated on the development side the HUD source we have applied is for half of the costs, but we have not received it; the Foundation would make up the difference to help build it; on the operations side HUD signs a 40 year contract with owner of property for an operating subsidy; HUD pays a portion of the rent and the tenants pay a portion; it's a 40 year commitment; Foundation plans to add to that; if the Foundation was unable to secure funds we could still operate efficiently with HUD money. Rosan asked what the HUD portion was for the rent. Shuler stated that HUD makes up the difference. Rosan asked what these units were expected to be rented for. Shuler stated she believed \$500 a month; we don't know what the market can bear at this point; could be more. Rosan stated she wasn't clear on where the curb cuts were going to be; will this be a concern. Wetherholt stated it will be fairly low traffic; doesn't seem like it will be much of a problem. Rosan asked when construction begins how will these curb cuts affect the development. Wetherholt stated it should be very low use. Rosan stated according to the overlay text there was a plan for an illuminated sign; is that part of the plan. Shuler stated she didn't think there would be a sign. Rosan stated that needs to be removed from the limited overlay text. Rosan asked according to the overlay text if the building is put up for sale does it always have to be used as this type of facility. Gard stated it would have to be rezoned if there was another use. Rosan clarified that was the only place it mentions disabilities. Gard stated it can certainly be inserted into the body of text. Rosan clarified that the City is electing to take fees in lieu of parkland. Gard stated that the Parks Board has recommended fees; they cannot obtain connectivity by requiring

parkland so their recommendation is to accept fees. Rosan asked about the ravine. Wetherholt stated there is a creek and ravine that drops off property line; is based on course of stream; bottom of the hill; property line is close to that; contours level off property and runs right into creek. Rosan asked if there was any special study given to putting a building that close to the ravine. Wetherholt stated it would be a problem if the building was in a floodplain; this is on a great deal of elevation; stream won't impact building or vice versa. Rosan asked about water run off. Wetherholt stated when site work is detailed and designed it will have to meet all of the water quality requirements. Thom asked if this property would fail for any reason later on and the use changes, would that require additional parking and is there enough room for required setbacks. Gard stated not without a variance; there are parking and setback variances as well. Thom stated so we can say if this were to be rezoned to Suburban Office or Community Commercial it would need more parking; but it would not have enough space without a variance. Gard stated it would depend on the size of the building. Thom stated he was talking about the existing building; it would require more spaces. Thom asked if there would be any tenants that would have a drivers license. Shuler stated the majority do not drive. Thom asked if the Good Neighbor Agreement is typical with all of the other facilities; has this agreement been reviewed by the surrounding residents. Shuler stated that we don't have one for every unit; generally only on new builds because of rezoning issues; something that we offer the neighbors; currently have 8 or 9 throughout the area; shared agreement with residents in neighborhood meeting; but we have not gotten to the point where anyone would sign it; we will sign it today or we will sign it whenever anyone else is comfortable signing it. Thom asked if the officers of the Condo Association had reviewed it. Shuler stated they have, but we do not have their comments. Price clarified that this parcel was rezoned in 2000 from residential single family to Suburban Office and asked when Courtyard at Beecher was built. Gard stated it was rezoned in 2000 and it went from SF residential to MF residential. Thom stated he believed most of that area called for Suburban Office or Residential. Price asked if that parcel was zoned Suburban Office before condos were built. Sherwood stated the area was zoned all at one time. Price asked would this property need to be rezoned if it had a new overlay text. Gard stated it would have to be rezoned if it was anything other than this specific use. Thom clarified that even if they were rented to others with non-disabilities the limited overlay text would have to be dropped; if someone else purchases it they have to occupy it with those persons with disabilities without rezoning. Price asked if there were private companies for profit that operate these types of buildings. Shuler stated she couldn't think of any for profit companies that do this type of housing; not very profitable; this is very specialized housing; National Church Residences is similar to what we do; Creative Housing works with MRDD; there are other groups who have special needs housing, but most are non profit. Price asked if any disability would include rehabilitation; is your intent only mental illness. Shuler stated we can change the language to say disability by a mental illness. Rosan stated if the use is what is of concern why is there a use listed in the overlay text; why not eliminate use. Shuler stated we put that in upon advice; we are fine with changing text. Rosan asked about the parcel right next to the property that was zoned Suburban Office. Gard stated it is a limited overlay; the Final Development Plan has expired so whatever they decide to do will have to come back through Planning Commission. Rosan stated we have AR nestled in the middle of SO and we've got a big section of AR; if you look at specific parcels there is an intervening SO zoning; what kind of options do we have if we would like to see it changed to AR. Gard stated it is developer driven; Canini owns it and still has intentions of developing it; but now it is market driven; if he decides to build another multi-family unit he would have to come back through the process. Rosan asked since this property is nestled in among office buildings does that factor in negatively. Shuler stated we always tend to view it as a transition; properties that are in transition from one type of use to another; so we have sites that are similar; commercial

or office doesn't seem to impact these units; these are residential in design; will have sloped roofs and brick; will still have a residential feel; don't think the transition will be a big deal. Shepherd asked if HUD were to undergo a massive change and they cut their funding would this project fail. Shuler stated we would look for another source; it has never happened. Penn stated it is a small enough project that we could shift local resources because it serves a priority residential community. Shepherd asked about the affect on property values; has there been an MAI report to show how it might affect other residential properties. Shuler stated in our experience we have never had an experience where it has negatively impacted adjacent properties; this is one of our highest quality projects. Shepherd stated he would like to see it in writing. Shuler stated it is unlikely that an appraiser would say something like that; New York City did a study on how this type of housing affected and impacted surrounding areas and it actually increased property values. Shepherd stated he would like a professional opinion stating how land use affects surrounding properties; appraisers do it all the time; if the property values are impacted because of this they have some recourse; they can go back to the professional. Shuler stated it would be unlikely that someone could come back to them. Shepherd stated he would like an appraiser's opinion to show that it would not affect property values; may have to look at other properties; whenever there is a zoning change we need to see if it is going to negatively impact someones property value. Shuler asked if that had been done with other multifamily projects. Shepherd stated we have asked for this in the past. Penn stated we can investigate that; trying to understand the request; we do have an appraisal. Shepherd asked how this type of zoning would affect other properties; has nothing to do with mental illness; need something that states how this zoning is going to affect other property values; current property owners bought based on current zoning; it is unreasonable to think it would change that quickly; when something was rezoned as short as 10 years ago there is less chance of change; if we wanted to put a diet place or bar next to your development those would be poor neighbors; would like more information before I affect their lives; if it shows that it would increase property values that's fine too; very easy to prove; someone just has to do the research. Shuler stated she thought it was based on the specific use. Shepherd stated that all property uses affect other uses; that's the reality; have to know that before I can make a decision. Andrews asked if this is the first one in Gahanna that CHN is behind. Shuler stated it was. Andrews clarified that it was not for developmentally disabled; if the object is trying to get the residents back into socialized life he didn't understand why it was at the back of a cul-de-sac. Shuler stated there are other civic things that are going on in the area; it feels like a Single Family home; it's a nice place to live; attractive home like setting; very active community for people to join; still close to places that you can walk. Price asked for a computer rendering on what the building footprint would look like from an aerial view; get a better sense of how it affects the whole area.

Chair opened it up for public comments.

Bobbie O'Keefe, 632 Antler Court stated she was an owner of a small business; my sister is disabled with mental illness and is a threat to no one or anyone's property; would hate to think that she would not be welcome in the City of Gahanna; Melissa's House is a wonderful opportunity to welcome people like my sister; I am in favor of this project and have volunteered to be on the citizen's advisory committee; there is currently a sexual predator about three blocks from my house and as a parent, I would feel safer next to Melissa's House. Jan Dacre stated she lived at Beecher Crossing and was concerned about HUD community housing; something that needs to be taken into consideration. Bill Sig, 1168 Shagbark Road; stated he was speaking as a private citizen and not part of the homeowner's board of directors; seems to be a large building for the amount of land space; things do change; if this structure were to be used for

something else more parking might be needed; some concern for staffing level; have terrific respect for CHN; my concerns are about the size of the building. George Mrus, 1217 Sanctuary Place; stated everyone is impacted by mental health struggles; Melissa's House offers the community an opportunity to overcome the stigma; the individuals will be provided hope to live a meaningful life; my mother was committed to a mental illness institution with no hope; she had schizophrenia and post partum depression; opportunity to move away from the dark ages; applaud the Goldbergs and CHN for providing hope for those with mental illness; hope that the commission would take this into account and approve this facility. Felix Melaragno, 502 Mechwart Place stated he and his wife retired to Gahanna because they had a good neighbor policy; found the location we wanted; we pay \$4200 a year in taxes; doesn't seem fair that a non profit building will be put 50 feet away from my home that will never pay taxes; have enjoyed our home for six years and now my wife is afraid; Gahanna's good neighbor policy has not taken effect; we don't mind paying the taxes; but we don't want this project going up next to us. Patricia Kovacs stated she was curious if the residents could use Project Mainstream buses to get around; enjoy Gahanna's diversity; familiar with mental illness; mother had bi-polar disorder; there are criminals with mental illness and there are law abiding citizens with mental illness; they are productive people; won't lie to say life was easy with my mom; when mom was having difficulties there was a gradual decline; hope that fear of people with mental illness will not factor into this decision. Sandy Richmond, 507 Mechwart; stated she lives across the pond from where Melissa's House will be; want to be a good neighbor and friends with condo community; we support Melissa's House; think its a good thing; really appreciate the process and the planning; plan on living there for a long time; this is a great community filled with passionate caring people who value diversity; we believe this is a good and right thing to do; hope that sponsors of Melissa's House can ease other's concerns; thank you for the process and we hope that you vote for the rezoning. Jackie Jacobs stated he was on Melissa's House board; thanked the Commission for sending it back to the community to address questions; as a result of those meetings we have tried to openly address all questions with regard to services on site; with result of questions more services will be provided; variance issues are being removed; passed out questions and answers that came up as a result and have tried to communicate those; mental health services is an evolving field; there used to be large state hospitals; these were basically warehouses; directives are changing; the patients should live in a community with a support system in place; understand the fears given past practices; we have a vision for much better services; in addition to what is provided thorough tax dollars, our board will be supplementing to provide an additional level of support; would ask for the Commission's favorable consideration. Dr. William Myers stated he was not speaking as an agent of the Condo Association; we keep trying to deal with the zoning issue and space; too big a building on too small a space; we have a delightful back yard and a very steep ravine; edge of building has a little patio circle that will have to be supported; a lot of property in an active waterway; so a lot of zoning issues; trying to avoid going into details of patient needs; all have been exposed to someone with mental health illness; I am not anti-treatment of mental illness; we are talking about a select population who are not sick enough to be hospitalized; zoning definition seems to be describing an institution; specifically don't know if they are asking for the right zoning change; there are concerns about selection process; CHN has no contracted medical arrangement; we have been through a long process together with quite a bit of incorrect info; starting asking for a place for eating disorders; know we can't discriminate based on diagnosis, but they have not been able to show me a similar facility in the state or the nation; need to go check and see what affect it has; this is a proposal for experimental housing; think they are putting them in a bad place; very likely to fail; our Condo board unanimously agreed not to sign the Good Neighbor Agreement. Price asked how many members were on the board. Myers stated there were 6; association has 53 members in 31 units. Price stated

it was mentioned that there were concerns about diagnosis or treatments given at Melissa's House. Shuler stated there is no medication being dispensed on site; no procedures; case manager may come to the site; is no different than if you lived in an apartment building; doesn't suddenly turn it into a hospital use; there will not be a lot of traffic; if they need psychiatric treatment they would go to their doctor; case manager will work on their goals only. Price clarified that diagnosis comes before screening process. Myers stated the job description for the on site staff person has not been determined; no medical integration; have specific contracts for only 2 sites. Price asked if the Good Neighbor Agreement was handed out at the January 17th resident meeting. Shuler stated we brought a template; listened to questions and brought a red lined copy back based on feedback. Myers stated he attended the January 10th meeting; it turned into an emotional mess; lack of information sharing; felt it was more of the applicant telling us how it was going to be; there is no job description for the on site staff person. Penn stated we do not have a formal agreement with mental health; as to the reference of this being categorized as a hospital there are a tremendous amount of laws about those issues; this is not a treatment facility; treatment will occur off site; which doesn't take any work with a qualified agency. Kathy Campbell stated she was in support of Melissa's House; live on first road and if someone wants to walk through my yard and get care or go to Giant Eagle that is fine; please vote in favor of this; moved to Gahanna because I thought it was a place where everyone was accepted. Thom took a show of hands poll of audience members on how many would be in favor of the project and how many would be opposed. Andrews stated this application will be discussed next Wednesday the 10th at 7:00 p.m.; hope that everyone can make it; shows that we are a very involved community.

Chair closed the workshop at 8:18 p.m.

V-0003-2009

To consider a variance application to vary Section 1163.02(a) of the codified ordinances of the City of Gahanna; to allow a reduction in the parking requirement and to vary Section 1167.15(b) to allow a variance for the parking setback; by Elaine Goldberg, applicant. (Advertised in RFE 11/26/09)

PL-0001-2009

To make a recommendation to Council for park land dedication requirement; for development of property located at 1105 Beecher Crossing North; Melissa's House by Pizzuti Companies, applicant